

THE SENATE MUST REFORM CLOTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. Mr. Speaker, the American people have given our 45th President and the 115th Congress a clear mandate to revive our economy, secure our borders, restore our Nation's sovereignty, reinstate our Bill of Rights, and uphold the rule of law. Moreover, they have given us majorities in both Houses of Congress to do so. There is no excuse for failure.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton set a positive tone for this peaceful transition of power, a tone no doubt shared by many Members of Congress and many Americans of good will who did not vote on the prevailing side. This represents the best of American statesmanship.

Yet, we have also heard reactionary elements of the Democratic Party make a vicious pledge to thwart this mandate and destroy this President. One need look no further than Senator RED's disgraceful diatribe on Friday to realize that these threats far exceed the lunatic fringe now violently rioting in our streets.

□ 1015

They reach directly into the Halls of Congress.

To fulfill the mandate of the American people, we will need to deliberate wisely and in good faith, with all sides participating in the discussion and all voices heard. But, ultimately, those deliberations must result in laws to fulfill that mandate. The agenda is daunting, and time is fleeting.

The greatest single obstacle to this era of reform is the 60-vote threshold to invoke cloture in the Senate, and I rise today to urge the Senate to finally reform it. Given the record of abuse of this rule and avowed intentions of many in that body, nothing will change legislatively unless the Senate Republican majority takes action when they organize in January. All the reforms that the American people called for, that the President will request, and that the House will pass will be stopped dead in the Senate.

Now, I don't argue to abandon this rule, but rather to restore it to its original purpose. Cloture is rooted in a sound and ancient parliamentary principle that, as long as one-third of a deliberative body wants to debate an issue, that debate should continue. After all, a minority exists to convince the majority of its way of thinking. This is the essence of deliberation.

But this principle assumes it is an actual debate where Members are talking to one another, and it requires that the debate be germane to the question at hand and that it is not dilatory. That is how cloture started. But over the 20th century, it degenerated into a 60-vote administrative threshold just to consider legislation. Ironically, a

procedure designed to protect debate has now morphed into a procedure that very effectively prevents debate.

The two Houses of Congress are designed to disagree with each other, but once the House and the Senate independently exercise their best judgment on a particular matter, there is a conference process developed over centuries to resolve their differences. This process cannot function if one House simply refuses to consider the other House's work.

The modern notion of cloture prevents that process and the system breaks down. During the last several Congresses, the House has sent hundreds of bills—including the appropriations bills that fund this government—to the Senate; but instead of amending their ideas into those bills or sending us bills of their own, they have simply refused to consider them by a minority denying cloture.

Now, some Senators have said that this mechanism is necessary to preserve collegiality and encourage compromise, but how can you have collegiality when one side simply refuses to talk to the other? How can you have compromise when the matter to be compromised cannot be taken up and discussed?

Others have said that since most legislation grows the powers of government, it is an effective brake on that tendency. It is true this rule effectively blocks bad legislation. It also very effectively blocks good legislation that is necessary to reverse this trend. The current cloture rule provides a ratcheting effect that locks in every expansion of government over the past century.

Now, some Republicans have said that it has been most useful when they have been in the minority. I have to ask them, do you want to be a successful majority or a successful minority? You cannot be both as long as cloture exists in its current form.

Voters elected Republican majorities in both Houses of Congress, and they expect action. They will get it from the President and from the House. But in order for the Senate to rise to this occasion, it must reform its cloture rule when it organizes in January.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO PALM SPRINGS POLICE OFFICERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the lives of Palm Springs Officers Jose "Gil" Vega and Lesley Zerebny and to support the incredible law enforcement officers in my district. It is important to tell their story and forever record their heroism in our national RECORD.

Officers Vega and Zerebny were, tragically, shot and killed in the line of duty last month while responding to what seemed like a routine domestic disturbance in Palm Springs, California.

Officer Vega lived by the mantra of "To Serve and Protect." He graduated from Indio High School and joined the force in Palm Springs in 1982. He was always witty, quick to tell a joke and to offer guidance to new officers. He was an inspiration to friends, family, and countless people who knew him. The day he died, he was only 2 months away from retiring after 35 years of service.

He volunteered to pick up a shift on that day—on his day off. He is survived by his wife, Susana, nine children, and many grandchildren.

Officer Lesley Zerebny was new to the force, with a lifetime of service. She showed a passion for law enforcement and service her entire life, no doubt inherited from her father, a California Highway Patrol officer. She was raised in Hemet, California, and attended West Valley High School. As a young girl, she always stood up to bullies to protect others and for justice. She was also known for her pranks and her fun-loving spirit.

Officer Zerebny was a mother of a 4-month-old daughter, Cora. She had just returned from maternity leave when she was killed. She is survived by her husband Zack, a Riverside County Sheriff's Department officer, and by baby Cora.

Officer Vega and Officer Zerebny were two of California's finest. Their lives of service and spirit of community embody the values of law enforcement officers across our great Nation. Each day, men and women like Lesley and Gil wake up, kiss their families good-bye, and go to work knowing full well the risks they take to keep us safe. Spouses, children, and parents wonder if they will ever return that day.

Law enforcement officers see danger and they don't run from it; they run toward it to protect others. We are safer because of them. They and their families deserve our utmost gratitude for their service.

So on behalf of the people of California's 36th Congressional District, my wife, Monica, and my family, I want to thank Officer Vega and Officer Zerebny and their families for their ultimate sacrifice. Our hearts are with you, and our hearts are with all law enforcement brothers and sisters during their time of mourning. We mourn with you, and we continue to offer our deepest gratitude for your service. Your dedication and the risks you take each and every day will never be forgotten.

Officer Vega and Officer Zerebny, end of watch, October 8, 2016.

WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE IN AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I have been on the floor so many times over the last year or so talking about the 16

years of war in Afghanistan and the waste of money, but, more importantly, the waste of life.

The titles that I am going to share with the House today have appeared in October and November in articles, national articles, about the failed policy in Afghanistan. I would like to share those very quickly.

“U.S. Pledges Another \$800 Million to Afghanistan Despite Rampant Corruption.”

“Four Americans Die in Suicide Blast At U.S. Base in Afghanistan; 17 Others Wounded.”

These are headlines, Mr. Speaker.

“Latest Afghan Attack Raises Perplexing Questions on Security.”

Another title: “The U.S. Spent Billions Building Roads in Afghanistan. Now Many of Them Are Beyond Repair.”

Another title: “Inspector General: Pentagon Must Explain Afghan ‘Ghost Soldier’ Problems. Funding for Afghan Military Wasted on Non-Existent Soldiers.”

Mr. Speaker, 200,000 Afghanistan ghosts that the taxpayers of America have been paying for their services, and they don’t even exist.

When I read that, I wrote a letter to the Defense Secretary, Ash Carter, and I said to Secretary Carter: Please explain how much money did we pay to the ghosts that don’t even exist? How long have we been paying the ghosts that don’t exist? We are talking about 200,000 Afghan soldiers that don’t even exist.

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the House of Representatives does not have a debate on our policy regarding Afghanistan. How much longer can a nation that is \$19.8 trillion in debt—that is America, \$19.8 trillion in debt—and how many more billions of dollars can we keep putting into the black hole of Afghanistan and keep losing our young men and women in a country that is never going to change?

It goes back to Alexander the Great. It goes back to the British. It goes back to the Russians. Anyone who has ever gone into that country known as Afghanistan has eventually left, and they knew there was nothing they could change.

Not America, though. We have been there 16 years. We don’t even debate it on the floor of the House. We will be passing a DOD funding bill pretty soon, and there will be billions of dollars going to Afghanistan and there will be very little debate on it. There are those on the Democratic side and the Republican side, Mr. Speaker, who do care about our troops, who do care about the wasted money, and who do care about a policy that has no end to it.

It is not fair to our men and women in uniform. They deserve better from this Congress. It is our constitutional duty that we debate policy that sends our young men and women to die. Yet we do not debate it. It just goes on and on.

This poster that I brought with me today, Mr. Speaker, before I close, I

have signed over 11,000 letters to families and extended families who have lost loved ones in Afghanistan and Iraq. Recently, we have had seven Americans killed in Afghanistan. I do not understand why we are so void of a debate. James Madison would have been very disappointed, Mr. Speaker. It was Madison who said that it is the legislative branch that will debate and vote on war, not the executive branch.

But we have abdicated our responsibility to the President and let the President decide what the foreign policy should be and how we should use our men and women in uniform. That is a sad day for America.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the House for this time. I close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform, to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform and hold in His loving arms those young Americans who have given their life for this country. God bless America.

HONORING THE MEMORY OF JAMES BARLOW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. BONAMICI) for 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of a dedicated teacher, mentor, and public servant, Mr. James Barlow.

Many of us in public service can name a person who inspired us or clearly remember an experience that ignited our interest in the important issues that are shaped through politics and government. For thousands of Oregonians, that spark was Mr. Barlow.

Born in Portland, Oregon, in 1929, Mr. Barlow earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Oregon State University. He taught social studies in the Beaverton School District in Oregon’s First Congressional District from 1962 until 2005. He always made his classrooms laboratories of curiosity.

Some of his best lessons didn’t take place in a classroom at all. They took place on the floor of the Model Presidential Nominating Conventions started by Mr. Barlow in the mid-1960s. Every 4 years for four decades, thousands of high school students from all over the State would gather, usually in Portland, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. They would step into the role of State delegations, vote on platform issues, cast ballots for the nomination, and broker and negotiate with other delegations.

They got ready for this by studying their assigned State’s demography, history, politics, and economy. Mr. Barlow and his colleagues prepared the students for months, leading class discussions on candidates in the primaries, the American political landscape, and the intricacies of delegate math. Student participants had to be sharp and organized. I know this firsthand because my son participated in the 2004 Model Convention and took preparatory evening classes with Mr. Barlow at Portland State University.

These Model Conventions were no simple class simulations. Major Presidential candidates came by and spoke to the crowd of student delegates. Robert Kennedy, Nelson Rockefeller, George McGovern, Hubert Humphrey, Jesse Jackson, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Michael Dukakis, and Bill Clinton all stopped by at a Model Convention as they campaigned ahead of Oregon’s Presidential primaries.

□ 1030

The model conventions exemplified Mr. Barlow’s leadership, enthusiasm, and imagination, but former students know that he also connected with and motivated his students in smaller, quieter ways as well. His psychology, philosophy, and current affairs courses were legendary at Aloha High School, where he spent most of his career. He inspired students to think beyond tests and essays, he challenged them to think critically, and he encouraged them to consider new perspectives on information they consumed.

As a teacher, he saw the potential in every student. With his dry wit, his deep knowledge, and genuine enthusiasm for his subject matter, Mr. Barlow created a learning atmosphere where everyone felt, and everyone was, welcome and valuable.

There was something that helped with the welcoming—doughnuts. Long before doughnuts became a craze in Portland, Mr. Barlow was bringing them to his classes and to his colleagues in the social studies office. He would announce: Coffee and doughnuts will be served in the starlight room. Now, there was no starlight room, but the phrase evoked a gracious and relaxed lounge space. The school year in the Portland metro area is typically rainy, and fall and winter school days often start before dawn, but his words and his treats were always a welcome pick-me-up.

The day after Mr. Barlow’s death, scores of his former students and colleagues observed “coffee and doughnut day,” going out for a sugary bite and a cup of coffee and posting pictures on social media. It was touching to all who knew him.

The life and work of Mr. James Barlow matter also to those who never knew him. That is because he taught thousands of Oregonians to be active, engaged, and sharp-thinking participants in our democracy. Whether they went on to work in public service or not, and no matter what their party affiliation, the students of Mr. Barlow became better citizens because of his contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we can all be inspired by Jim Barlow’s example as we serve in this remarkable House of Representatives. I offer my sincere condolences to his family, especially to his wife of 47 years, Susan, his former colleagues, and to the generations of students who mourn his loss.